

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM  
For Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation

To: American University of Armenia

October 22-26, 2023 Virtual Visit

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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## **SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT**

### *1. IA. Description of Institution and Accreditation History*

The American University of Armenia (AUA) was established in September 1991 with the specific purpose of introducing an American model of higher education to Armenia, becoming the first U.S. accredited higher education institution in the region. While AUA had the support of the Armenian government, the university had to find its place in the Armenian system of higher education as the very first private university. AUA's mission is "to have an impact on students and the community as a center of academic excellence, innovation, inquiry, and diversity that contributes to the further development and advancement of Armenia, the region and the world through teaching and scholarship, fostering creativity, integrity and community service." AUA has grown extensively since its founding, diversifying its academic offerings, enhancing community outreach, positioning the university for continued growth and excellence. AUA brought the first U.S. master's degrees to Armenia and promoted a focus on student-centered learning. Originally, AUA opened its doors in 1991 in Yerevan as a graduate institution that offered master's degrees in disciplines that were chosen specifically to complement, not duplicate, programs offered in local institutions of higher education. However, that strategy has since evolved as Armenia and the region changed. During this period, the Armenian government adopted a three-level higher education system of degrees with state universities offering bachelor, master's, and doctoral degrees, moving away from the previous two-level system. The Armenian government also signed on to the European Union's Bologna Process and continues to reform university education to meet the requirements of the European Credit Transfer System. Along with these developments, other universities in Armenia and the region began offering degrees once offered only at AUA. AUA has also an approved off-campus site in Dilijan which currently hosts the full graduate program, Master of Science in Economics (MSE), with the cooperation and support of the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA). AUA does not have any distance education degree programs.

AUA's academics are centered in four colleges with 11 graduate and eight undergraduate programs, including one undergraduate and two graduate programs launched in fall 2023, and seven graduate certificates. The transition from a March-October academic calendar to the more standard September- June academic calendar in 2009, AUA's growing reputation for educational quality, an alumni network, its active recruitment efforts, and continued commitment to ensuring financial assistance to students have made AUA attractive to students. In September 1991, AUA enrolled 101 students, all graduate students. In fall 2022, AUA enrolled 2247 students, 1811 undergraduate students and 436 graduate students. The student enrollment increase is mainly due to the undergraduate offerings that started in 2013. AUA has signed approximately 20 Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with international higher education institutions, private sector entities, and public sector partners. AUA initiated the WSCUC accreditation process in 1998. The university was granted Candidacy in 2002, and was granted initial accreditation effective August 2006, at which time the AUA was a graduate institution. In March 2015, AUA's accreditation was reaffirmed for nine years, through February 2024. In 2011, AUA initiated a Structural Change process to begin undergraduate education. And, in May 2012, AUA was granted approval to launch an undergraduate program as of fall 2013. The university applied and earned approval for several new programs: undergraduate degrees in Business, Computer Science (formerly Computational Sciences), English and Communications (2012), Engineering Sciences (2017), Data Science (2017), Politics and Governance (2020), Nursing (2022), Environmental and Sustainability Sciences (2022), and graduate degrees in Economics (2012), Strategic Management (now Management) (2017), Human Rights and Social Justice (2020), International Relations and Diplomacy (2022), and Public Affairs (2022).

## *2. IB. Description of Team's Review Process*

In May 2023, the team members had an orientation meeting with the WSCUC liaison and an overview of the visit was shared. On July 26, 2023, the team and WSCUC liaison virtually met with one of

the two AUA's boards for an informative and helpful conversation. In August of 2023, WSCUC invited the team members to independently study and review AUA's institutional report and its accompanying documents provided by the institution. The team members completed worksheets to summarize the detailed information, noting strengths and areas of good practice, weaknesses and areas for improvement, and specific questions for further inquiry relative to the WSCUC components, thematic areas, and the Standards of Accreditation. A confidential email account was established to allow for greater participation from the campus community and to receive any additional information. The confidential email inbox was monitored by the assistant chair. The chair had a separate conversation with AUA's new president prior to the accreditation visit. The chair also conducted the offsite campus visit remotely. The virtual interviews occurred on October 20, 2023, where the chair met with the dean, program chair, Master of Science in Economics (MSE) program faculty, students, and the assistant to the head of Central Bank of Armenia (CBA). During the interviews, the chair solicited input which verified and confirmed the comparability of the MSE program and the quality of the student services and facilities at the off-campus site with the main campus. It was encouraging to see that students at the offsite program felt the resources and experience in Dilijan warranted expansion into other graduate programs for AUA. The chair then watched recorded videos of the off-campus site, and subsequently submitted the off-campus site report which is in the appendix of this report. Another member conducted a review of distance education programs. Although AUA does not offer any distance education degree programs, during the COVID19 pandemic AUA switched to online delivery of courses and continues to offer some courses or parts of courses remotely as recently as spring 2023. None of the programs or courses are instructionally designed for remote learning. AUA occasionally offers courses online through synchronous delivery, especially when faculty members are international and located outside of Armenia. These courses are conducted on Zoom. AUA's use of distance education is described in a report in the appendix. Team worksheets and meeting notes were synthesized and

reviewed collectively during a pre-visit team call on September 18, 2023. AUA's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) had prepared a draft schedule for the team prior to the on-site visit. However due to geopolitical unrest, the reaffirmation visit switched to a remote review, across four time zones. On Saturday October 21, 2023, the team began the remote visit with an executive planning session, at which the team reviewed the final visit schedule, identified specific lines of inquiry for each individual and group meeting, and confidential email contents were shared with all the team members. Over the week of October 21-26, the team met via Zoom with many AUA constituents including university leaders, campus administrators, faculty, staff, students representing both undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as AUA's Board of Directors. The team learned about the institution, its organizational structure, shared governance, faculty senate, student support services, program reviews, faculty academic processes, financial position, plans for expansion and strategic planning. The visit ended on Thursday October 26, 2023, with a private meeting between the chair and AUA's president, followed by a public exit meeting during which the final commendations and recommendations were read to the AUA community via zoom, and with all team members present online. The team recognizes the substantial work that the ALO and the institution put into its report and in responding to requests for additional documents, as well as last minute major adjustments to the schedule as the visit switched from an in-person onsite visit to a remote one. The team thanks the American University of Armenia for rapidly adapting to provide a seamless remote visit with remarkable grace in light of regional instability and other unexpected changes.

3. *IC. Institution's Reaffirmation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence*

The team commends American University of Armenia for the well-organized, thorough, and thoughtful institutional report. AUA's report also highlighted the challenges the university overcame during the COVID19 pandemic, as well as the effect of the political unrest due to several wars in Artsakh

(Nagorno Karabakh) and its impact on the students and the community at large. AUA selected two themes for its Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR): 1) Integrity of the Undergraduate Degree and 2) Academic Program Review. The institution's exploration of its themes had productive outcomes that the university believes contributes to continued development of its academic program reviews and the quality of the undergraduate degrees. It was apparent to the team that considerable time and energy were invested in gathering data, analyzing, and understanding the findings, preparing an institutional report highlighting outcomes, and compiling substantial supporting documentation. The report thoughtfully discusses AUA's future plans and alignment to its mission. The team observed that student feedback is actively sought during program reviews and evaluation of student services and is utilized for continuous improvement. Program chairs get release time for academic program review.

## **SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS**

### **IIA. Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions**

The institutional report addressed the 2015 WSCUC Commission Action Letter noting four areas for further attention and development on the part of the institution: 1) Strengthening the institution's financial position and capacity, 2) Continuing to implement the policy of faculty scholarship, 3) Enhancing diversity, and 4) Aligning program review, planning, and resource allocation. The institutional report details the university's efforts in all four areas. The report and associated documents reviewed by the team, as well as the site visit interviews, confirm the following responses to previous Commission actions:

#### **1. Strengthening the institution's financial position and capacity**

Since the last review, AUA has continued to focus on strengthening its financial position, with increased fundraising in multiple areas, expense control, dedicated focus on endowment growth both in US Dollars and Armenian Dram, and continued success in obtaining outside grants for facilities. Fundraising growth has occurred in scholarship, facilities, endowment, and while annual giving has

continued, it has reduced in prominence in the revenue stream. The 100 Pillars program launched in 2013 secured 100 donors who gifted \$50,000 over five years. This campaign raised \$5 million dollars of unrestricted funds to support the university operating budget. More recently, the university launched a follow-up program to attract 200 individuals to donate \$5,000 a year for five years. Currently, \$1.2 million has been raised, and it is expected that the number will reach its target by the end of 2026. In 2023, AUA received the largest single donation pledge in the history of the university, \$20 million towards the construction of humanities and social sciences, and arts buildings. Another \$10 million is pledged for a science and engineering building. For the past seven years, the university has operated within the framework of a consistently balanced budget, which is particularly notable given that the sharp evaluation in the local currency vs. the US Dollar (a 25% increase over the past 1.5 years) has posed inflationary challenges. In response, the university has maintained an annually balanced budget by allocating more donations towards the annual budget rather than to the endowment. Within this operating budget, endowment payouts are expected to cover approximately 19% of the operating budget in FY24, compared to 8% in FY13. Tuition revenue is expected to cover approximately 41% of the total operating budget in FY24, compared to 13% in FY13, while the budget itself has grown from \$6 million to \$19 million over the same time period. Increases in these diverse revenue sources has decreased the dependence on fundraising for the operating budget, resulting in a more financially stable institution. Further underscoring the university's strengthened financial position is the underlying endowment, the six-fold increase of the market value of the university's endowment, approximately \$100 million in US dollars, which is managed professionally by the University of California, and an additional \$20 million which is in USD but is managed by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) – a founding institution of the University.

## 2) Continuing to implement the policy of faculty scholarship

Following the 2015 Educational Effectiveness Review, the university revised its Appointment, Retention, and Promotion and Faculty Titles policy and adopted corresponding promotion procedures. The policy outlines the university's definition of scholarship based on the Boyer model. The promotion procedures, approved by the faculty senate and board of trustees, include self-reporting and a peer review of evidence of achievement in each of the spheres of teaching, scholarship, and university, as well as professional and public service. During the faculty open meeting, faculty members recommended a review of the existing promotion policy in effect for the past eight years to further define the metrics used in evaluation of faculty members for research output and teaching effectiveness as AUA aspires to become more research intensive. In 2015, to promote research, the university began granting annual faculty research awards as well as faculty and staff professional development, research and instructional development grants. The Faculty Workload policy, revised in 2017 and currently under review, includes the valuing of time for research and scholarship, while the faculty evaluation procedures require faculty to highlight research and scholarship.

## 3) Enhancing diversity

Armenia is a homogenous country where 98% are ethnically Armenian; thus, the university embraces and strives for diversity in gender, regional origin, and socio-economic background. Currently, AUA student enrollment is 37% male and 63% female; and approximately 8% are international; 73% of the students from Armenia are from Yerevan and 27% are from regions outside of Yerevan. The institution's enrollment of the equivalent of Pell recipients is 50%. Enrollment diversity, including both international and regional students, had been a focus of intensified recruitment efforts prior to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. In the last two years, AUA returned to international recruitment as well as efforts outside the capital city of Yerevan, where approximately half the country's population lives. In fall 2022, international students from over 20 countries made up 8% of the student enrollment, an

improvement over previous years, while still short of AUA's target of 20%. AUA offers merit-based scholarships to international students. AUA's faculty is diverse: they come from Greece, United States, Lebanon, Russia, France, Canada, Bulgaria, Iran, Chile, and other countries. AUA has engaged in several initiatives to expand and diversify the campus. A number of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed with universities in the United States and Europe promoting student, faculty and staff exchanges. In terms of services, the university's campus is accessible to individuals with physical disabilities. The university's accessibility has been highlighted in a report supported by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as the only higher education institution surveyed in Armenia to have a physically accessible campus and to have developed policies relevant to students with disabilities. The policies follow AUA's commitment to be open to all academically qualified applicants regardless of race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, marital status, sex, age, or sexual orientation. The university provides services and programs to support students with disabilities. The university's Office of Student Affairs provides counseling, disability services, accommodations, and organizes workshops and discussions to help promote and encourage inclusion and tolerance. Although Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) was not a selected theme in the thematic approach, AUA has taken time to reflect on it, particularly in light of WSCUC's new standards. AUA has plans to finalize and adopt AUA's DEI definition as well as develop learning modules for faculty and staff development on DEI related topics. AUA recommended that its Academic Program Review process include a mandate to demonstrate how the program embodies DEI within the curriculum and support provided to students, faculty, and staff. AUA is assessing its DEI strengths and areas for improvement, including an examination of its diversity definition, analysis of existing data, and identification of areas requiring more focus. In their own survey and inventory of support services, facilities and other aspects, it was revealed that AUA's strengths in DEI include its physical accessibility, equity in student services, relative diversity, and potential to foster DEI in the

classroom. Areas for improvement included communication and decision making, perceptions of equity including salary and promotion criteria, barriers to access, and policy implementation. Ninety-five percent of AUA's academic programs have at least one student learning outcome related to DEI. The undergraduate programs include two specific student learning outcomes related to DEI. The institutional report also mentions a DEI working group that met, analyzed surveys and existing policies, then developed draft definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion for further discussion, review, and adoption by campus. The definitions were reviewed by the Accreditation Steering Committee and will be further reviewed in the upcoming academic year. During the interviews, many university constituents noted the need to have an independent DEI office and to recruit a full-time Title IX Officer to promote and institutionalize DEI initiatives across all functions of the institution. Based on AUA's stated commitment to DEI, the team recommends that AUA continue efforts to: a) finalize and adopt formal DEI definitions encompassing diverse perspectives and cultural sensitivities in curriculum and research; b) specify a designated DEI officer; and c) develop learning module(s) covering harassment, discrimination, disrespectful behavior, and reporting procedures for faculty, staff, and students.

#### 4) Aligning program review, planning, and resource allocation

Following the 2015 Educational Effectiveness Review and with the adoption of the university's strategic plans, AUA began to better align the budgeting process with assessment efforts, to ensure that sufficient provision of human and financial resources is considered. The university earmarked a course release for program chairs leading program review, and, upon request, allocated administrative staff resources beyond that provided in all cases by the university's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA). The budgeting process timeline has been adjusted to better align with overall university planning and to consider recommendations from program review. The Academic Program Review (APR) guidelines require that program self-studies consider the allocation of resources and the need for additional resources, which is expected to be reflected in academic program proposed budgets.

Despite these initial steps, and as a core component of the TPR, more attention is needed to regularize and better align these processes. AUA submitted a progress report on undergraduate education on September 7, 2018, as per the Commission letter of March 6, 2015.

The team determined that AUA satisfactorily addressed the requirements from the last review, but more work is needed in some areas, as per the institutional report and confirmed by the interviews; both identified a need for more work in aligning and harmonizing program review, assessment, resource allocation, and planning. AUA is encouraged to continue to refine these processes.

## **IIB. Component 2: Compliance: Review under WSCUC Standards and compliance with federal requirements**

### *- Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives* *Institutional Purpose*

Since its founding over three decades ago, AUA has sustained impressive growth in academic offerings, administrative support units, and physical infrastructure. The initial mission to offer master's degree programs along the model of American higher education has been expanded, since 2013, to include undergraduate majors and minors as well as General Education (GE). During the interviews, program chairs noted program development, review and offerings is a bottom up, faculty driven and inclusive process. There are discussions of possible future doctoral programs. During the interviews, it was noted by the board, the executive team, faculty, and senate that PhD programs are a critical prerequisite to build internal capacity to achieve AUA research intensive aspirations. AUA's published mission and vision statements reflect the university's purpose and impact on the community, the region, and beyond (CFR 1.1). The General Education (GE) program serves as the foundation to achieve AUA's educational objectives and provides a breadth of general knowledge and skills for life. GE was reviewed as a program in 2019. Educational goals and student learning outcomes by program, including GE, are published in course syllabi, in the catalog, and on the university website (CFR 1.2). Information about

AUA's academic programs, services and costs to students are also published in the catalog and posted on the university website. All the undergraduate degree programs are described in the catalog as four years in length, and most undergraduate programs publish a typical schedule for completing the program in four years. The lengths of full-time study for graduate degree programs are published in the catalog for each program. Through its annual Factbook and Data Dashboard, AUA regularly publishes data it has generated about student achievement, including retention and graduation rates (CFR 1.6). Summaries of student learning assessments are not consistently published on the university website, as acknowledged by AUA in its institutional report (CFR 1.2). The periodic assessment guidelines are concrete as to objectives, assessment methods, timelines, responsible parties, and strategies for closing the loop in response to findings. For some programs, assessment reports have not been posted since 2019, possibly due to the disruptions of the pandemic and other external situations. Other programs began posting reports again in 2021. AUA has developed and published an appropriate statement to protect academic freedom for faculty and students, including due process procedures (CFR 1.2). Also published are policies and processes that provide for fair and equitable treatment of students with respect to grievances, grades, student conduct, financial aid, and refunds (CFR 1.3). Other existing policies relate to research ethics and discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of disability (CFRs 1.3, 1.7).

#### *Integrity and Transparency*

Through its numerous and comprehensive policies ranging from academics and administration to finances and technology, and from codes of conduct to conflicts of interest, AUA exhibits integrity and transparency in its operations. External financial audits are conducted annually. In response to a previous Commission expectation for further work on defining and cultivating a commitment to diversity, AUA devoted a section of its institutional report to detailing actions taken in response to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (CFR 1.4). AUA has been proactive in addressing its diversity goals by

creating a loan and need-based financial aid program and a merit-based international student scholarship. The institutional report notes that AUA is the first university in Armenia to have a physically accessible campus, and has developed policies relevant to students with disabilities (CFR 1.4). AUA shared, in its action plan, goals to review perceptions of equity in compensation, promotion, professional development opportunities, and workload and to review policies to include DEI perspectives (CFR 1.4).

There are two board of trustees that support AUA. The American University of Armenia Corporation (AUAC), located in the United States, is made up primarily of members who are of Armenian descent, and is associated with the University of California (UC) system. Some board members are current or former UC professors and administrators. The Armenia-based board, the American University Fund Board (AUAF) is a required body by the Armenian government. During the interview with the board(s), members noted that they are proud of the evolution of the institution, the growth in enrollment, the quality of the faculty body and the overall excitement and engagement of its constituents (CFR 1.5). They also shared their priorities for AUA to 1) Increase the student body to meet the needs of the country and disciplines; 2) Maintain AUA as an apolitical academic institution of higher education recognized by all players (industry, government, other institutions, community); 3) Finance the planned growth and expansion and implementing it, within the regional political (war) and economic challenges (appreciation of the local currency); 4) Attract and increase full-time faculty compared to adjunct faculty; and 5) Strengthen research infrastructure and increase research productivity, and develop a PhD program. AUA received Substantive Change approval to begin offering a RN to BSN program, which launched in fall 2022. The historical evidence suggests a track record of openness in communication with WSCUC (CFR 1.8). Areas for further work include the consistent assessment of student learning outcomes across academic programs as well as regular public reporting of evidence of student learning (CFR 1.2). During the interviews, constituents recommended that communication from

the executive team be more transparent with the senate and faculty members about the aspirational growth plan, challenges, and implementation. Students recommended that the university revisit its communication platforms with students and streamline it to ensure effectiveness and consistency.

### *Conclusion*

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that AUA has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 1.

#### - *Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions*

##### *Teaching and Learning*

Several initiatives, such as financial aid, provided effective models for higher education in Armenia and the region based on American values and pedagogy. As a means to fulfill AUA's mission to have an impact not only on students but also on the community and the region, in addition to its academic programs, colleges have established research centers that focus on applied research related to development issues.

AUA's qualification to receive specialized professional accreditations also speaks to the caliber of teaching and learning (CFR 2.1). The institution publishes clear descriptions, educational goals, and student learning outcomes for all programs, including General Education, in course syllabi, the catalog, and on the university website (CFR 2.2).

##### *Scholarship and Creative Activity*

As an English-language university AUA has attracted hundreds of faculty with American and Western educations to Armenia, established a university extension program for continuing adult learning, introduced wireless internet and videoconferencing to a college campus, created the first university library open to the public at large with open stacks and electronic collections, opened university counseling services, established a Math and Writing Center, and was the first university to introduce graduation ceremonies to Armenia. AUA has established policies related to faculty and

student research (CFR 2.8), and the institution has clear policies and procedures related to faculty evaluation, promotion, and tenure (CFR 2.9).

### *Student Learning and Success*

Student learning outcomes are all reflected in course syllabi (CFR 2.4), and student learning assessment reports and results indicate appropriate checks on expectations of learning and standards of performance (CFRs 2.5, 2.6). AUA, being outside the United States, does not report to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), but does publicly report four-year graduation rates; the average four-year graduation rate for AUA is 65.5%, and the average six-year graduation rate is 81.3%. Disaggregated retention and graduation data for the last four years are reflected in its annual Factbook and Data Dashboard, and AUA regularly publishes data it has generated about student achievement (CFR2.10). AUA provides a description of academic advising processes for students that explains degree requirements, course offerings, and educational costs (CFR 2.12). The team encourages AUA to consider exploring advising models that may offer a more individualized, student-centered approach alongside the current group advising system. The team confirmed that student support services such as peer mentoring, a writing and math center, student workshops, and counseling services are widely utilized (CFR 2.13). The team suggests that AUA consider expanding in person accommodation and accessibility services, increasing awareness and training, and providing necessary equipment to meet the growing demand from the student community in line with planned expansion and growth. Additionally, the team invites AUA to consider the balance between admission standards and enrollment numbers, considering whether a focus on more selective criteria could complement the institution's expansion and growth efforts. Finally, the team recommends AUA further strengthen institutional resiliency by developing and broadly distributing contingency plans to maintain academic and business continuity in times of crisis (CFRs 1.7, 2.1, 3.1, 3.6, 3.7).

### *Conclusion*

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 2.

- *Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability*

AUA has benefited from a collaborative agreement with the University of California, the Armenian government's provision of buildings and facilities, and financial assistance from the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This framework and additional resources have provided a solid foundation for AUA. To accomplish its growth in enrollment and program offerings AUA has placed a priority on fiscal management with seven years of balanced budgets, an emphasis on fundraising and endowment growth, and a conservative approach to expenses. AUA has focused these resources to support significant enrollment and program growth. The expansion of program offerings and increased enrollment has resulted in FTE enrollment rising from 1446 in FY 2015 to 2,247 FY 2023. From fall 2019 to fall 2021, overall student enrollment has grown by 16%. FY 23 enrollment comprises 1811 undergraduates or 80% of total enrollment and graduate students comprise 436 students or 20% of enrollment. These expansions have stretched current resource models and AUA will need to continue to communicate with its stakeholders to ensure support systems scale effectively with the growth.

*Faculty and Staff*

It is clear that AUA faculty and staff are committed to the institution and are very aware of its impact on Armenia. The faculty at AUA includes 262 instructors; 82 full-time and 180 part-time and of the total 262, 184 are core faculty. AUA does not have a tenure system but does have multi-year contracts. AUA has concentrated on expanding its full-time faculty, growing from 43 in FY 16 to 82 in FY 23, marking a 48% increase over seven years. While the number of faculty is sufficient to deliver the program, there was repeated discussion throughout the community, including the board, of the need to continue to increase the full-time faculty, to complement the growth in program and students, and to

lessen staff's burden in drafting ongoing contracts for part-time hires. The staff are also feeling the pressures of the growth; however, they are committed to the institution and meeting the needs of the students. AUA employed 155 staff in FY 13 and the number grew 43% to 222 staff in FY 22. This is excluding custodial staff, whose services were outsourced in FY 22. The faculty and staff are sufficient in number, with professional qualification, and diversity to achieve the institution's educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic and co-curricular programs. However due to a significant increase in program offerings and student enrollment, human and physical resources need to be evaluated (CFRs 3.1 - 3.3).

#### *Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources*

AUA has made investments in its financial, physical, and technological infrastructure. AUA is financially stable and has unqualified independent financial audits. AUA has strengthened its financial position with increased fundraising in multiple areas, strong expense control, dedicated focus on endowment growth both in US Dollars and Armenian Dram, and continued success in obtaining outside grants for facilities. AUA has extended this strength in its financial position to its students, establishing the first student loan and need based tuition programs in Armenia. It is funded by both scholarships raised through fundraising, as well as by dedicating 26% of each year's tuition dollars to financial aid. Information Technology infrastructure is adequate to support the work of its faculty, staff, administrators, and students. AUA maintains a continual focus on cyber security as well as process and change management of its support systems. While facilities have been expanded, further space is required to accommodate ongoing growth. Recent additions include a dormitory that opened in 2021, an on-campus media lab slated for 2024, and plans for a comprehensive new facility anticipated by 2027. Leadership is employing creative solutions to address space limitations ahead of the 2027 expansion and will need to continue to prioritize these initiatives while also better informing the campus community about these developments (CFRs 3.4, 3.5). The team recommends that AUA accommodate

recent and anticipated enrollment growth by identifying and communicating essential infrastructure to meet AUA's goals without exceeding capacity, while balancing both short-term and long-term strategies for faculty, staff, space, and facilities (CFRs 3.5, 4.7).

#### *Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes*

The institution's organizational structures and decision-making processes are clear and consistent with its purposes, support effective decision making, and place priority on sustaining institutional capacity and educational effectiveness (CFR 3.6). AUA is supported by two dedicated boards: the American University of Armenia Corporation (AUAC) and American University of Armenia Fund (AUAF), composed of US-based members with substantial experience in education and fundraising. AUA has recently successfully transitioned to a new president and has sufficient numbers of qualified and committed administrative leaders to support its plans for growth (CFR 3.8). All leaders the team interviewed were focused on the impact of AUA on students and the broader community, upholding integrity in their approach. The need for the faculty senate to continue to increase its role in university governance was noted in institutional self-study (CFRs 3.6 - 3.10).

#### *Conclusion*

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that AUA has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 3.

- *Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement*

#### *Quality Assurance Processes*

The team confirmed that quality assurance processes are in place to collect and effectively use data (CFR 4.1). AUA has several well-established multi-layered assessment processes to help realize student achievement goals such as: course syllabus, end-of-course evaluations, annual student learning assessment, General Education assessment, periodic academic program reviews (APR), faculty and staff

evaluations, surveys (student exit surveys, and periodic faculty, staff, and alumni surveys) (CFR 4.1). The university developed effective and standardized guidelines, timelines, templates for academic assessment processes. AUA constituents (administrators, faculty, and staff) work collaboratively to promote a culture of data-driven periodic educational assessment in order to serve and achieve the institution's mission. Student feedback is extensively solicited and followed to ensure ongoing improvement. AUA's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) collects, compiles, analyzes, reports and archives data, shares data with and supports the administration, academic programs and academic support units in strategic planning and assessment in order to promote continuous improvement and ongoing quality assurance. The office increased its membership with three staff members primarily responsible for collecting, analyzing and reporting data, and supporting faculty and staff in utilizing data in the assessment of student learning.

#### *Institutional Learning and Improvement*

Every five to six years, all departments and programs at AUA undergo a thorough, data-driven review involving multiple internal stakeholders and external evaluators to ensure the academic programs' viability, relevance, and contribution to student success. Program chairs coordinate the review process at the program level and liaise with the other constituents. These processes are overseen by the Office of the Provost with the support of OIRA. The APR guidelines were revised by the Senate in 2013 following the last reaccreditation review and recommendations, and again in 2017. Additional refinements are currently to be taken up by the university's Curriculum Committee. OIRA works with administrative units and academic departments to launch several surveys for students (Freshman Student Exit Survey, Sophomore Student Exit Survey, Junior Student Exit Survey, Undergraduate Graduating Student Exit Survey, Graduate Student Exit Survey, Entering Freshman Student Survey), for alumni (Three-Month After Graduation Survey, a triennial alumni survey), for faculty and staff surveyed every three years, and employer satisfaction survey. The response rate was 16% for the freshman exit

survey, 25% for sophomore exit survey in 2018, and 18% for graduate exit survey that was conducted in 2023. The team encourages AUA to think of ways to ensure that this important work is consistent, that a culture of periodic review is nurtured, and that reviews of units (academic and administrative) are consistently conducted, with the results utilized and plans recommended for improvement. AUA publishes Factbook and Factsheet annually that includes statistics on student demographics, enrollment, academic performance, faculty, research centers, facilities, etc. OIRA compiles data from various university information sources to facilitate planning, budgeting, and decision-making processes of the institution, as well as to keep the university community informed (CFR 4.2). The university developed institutional dashboards, making data extraction capacity more timely, dynamic, and accessible (CFR 4.2). The utilization of dashboard data by the Board of Trustees and the executive committee for decision making is not clearly documented. AUA developed Academic Support Unit Review Guidelines to review annually these units with the commitment to continuous improvement and evidence-based decision making. The commitment to institutional learning and building a strong culture for continuous improvement have been impacted by the transition in the leadership, with an interim president, a new president, and a vacant provost position during the period of self-study and during the virtual review. The progress of the previous strategic plan and the establishment of improvement priorities for quality and effectiveness have been influenced by certain operational delays. AUA has outlined a timeline for reviewing the effectiveness of academic programs and support units, with a focus predominantly on undergraduate offerings. Assessment documentation, such as Annual Student Learning Assessment plans, reports, summaries, and academic program review reports, are securely published by OIRA and require a password for access. The resulting action items from program reviews identify areas for follow-up and enhancement. It would be beneficial for AUA to enhance broad and consistent communication and promote the application of assessment outcomes for ongoing improvement (CFR 4.2). Student feedback is actively solicited and incorporated into the improvement plans by the student

services units. During the interviews, the office of student affairs and the deans' sessions shared examples of closing the loop. The OIRA offers several annual workshops for faculty development; the workshops are mainly teaching and learning related other than new faculty orientation. AUA may want to enhance stakeholder training and professional development to ensure they can effectively integrate and use new tools in the program review process, including best practices for data analysis and interpretation (CFR 4.2). Faculty members have the responsibility for the development and periodic assessment of their academic programs, with improvement to be based on assessment results (CFR 4.4). OIRA submits an annual Student Grades Report that provides statistical grade information across courses and programs in both undergraduate and graduate levels (CFR 4.4). There are grade policies and grade appeal policies in place. Program review guidelines include two external evaluators in the review committee and the committee meets with stakeholders and solicits their input during the assessment process (students, faculty, alumni, employers, program leadership) (CFR 4.5). Leveraging existing assessment outcomes, AUA could benefit from initiating a comprehensive strategic planning process. The plan could feature detailed implementation strategies with robust mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and communicating progress. This approach will help align the strategic plan with AUA's academic and operational activities and enhance its role in guiding effective decision-making. The team observed that AUA tracks and implements action items arising from the program review process. The team suggests an annual broad discussion of progress, relevant data, and subsequent priorities (CFRs 4.6, 4.7). The Deans Council has been tasked with reviewing the Faculty Workload policy. The team encourages AUA to deliberately facilitate widespread dissemination and dialogue on data for informed decision-making (CFR 4.3). Moreover, the team advises AUA to maintain clear and consistent communication with stakeholders regarding the institution's growth goals, challenges, and countermeasures for the next five years.

In summary, AUA conducts continuous, regular, and participatory academic assessments grounded in evidence. The institution integrates results from these rigorous reviews into improvement initiatives, which may include curriculum updates or program discontinuation, reflecting external feedback, student requirements, market trends, DEI principles, and benchmarks against comparable US programs.

### *Conclusion*

The team's findings, subject to the Commission review, is that the institution provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 4.

### **IIC. Component 8: Institution specific themes**

#### *- Theme One: The Integrity of the Undergraduate Degree*

AUA offers eight undergraduate majors (Business, Computer Science, English, Communications, Data Science, Engineering Sciences, Politics and Governance, Nursing and Environmental and Sustainability Sciences). Attention to the student experience in each of these programs is strong and the overall program, inclusive of courses in the major, a capstone project, General Education courses, and elective courses, is comprehensive. All stakeholders the review team met with, including the academic deans, faculty, undergraduate program chairs, and AUAF Board, uniformly lauded the “high-caliber, motivated, and bright” students at AUA. University leadership is eager to capitalize on this positive trajectory of the university as a whole to continue expanding the number of students and undergraduate programs with an eye towards further contributing to the intellectual capital, knowledge base, and analytical thinking in Armenia. The AUAF Board specifically noted that interest in growing AUA is based on the “need to respond to the needs of the country...and to play a broader role in the region” and to provide greater opportunities and person-power to conduct research. Interviews with the undergraduate program team revealed a general trend of increased demand for AUA undergraduate

programs since the last review<sup>1</sup>, as well as an increase in the caliber of students as reflected in SAT scores and grades at admission. A remarkable 88% of students who are accepted to AUA matriculate. True to AUA's principles, success in the undergraduate program is bolstered by taking a holistic approach to supporting students, with the acknowledgment that students need support inside and outside the classroom. Throughout the review process, the team learned of the myriad ways student support offices, including the Academic Deans, Financial Aid, Student Affairs, and the Registrar collaborate to provide students with the support they need in every aspect of their lives.

Faculty and students alike noted a high level of satisfaction with the undergraduate degree programs at AUA. Faculty noted being impressed with the upper division students who are “critical thinkers, dynamic, and bright” and who choose AUA because of its reputation for having high standards. They also commented on the remarkable resilience the students display in the face of current crises, including the relatively recent war, COVID-19 pandemic, and current geopolitical conflicts. Despite these challenges, faculty observe a high level of collegiality and morale. Students equally expressed a high level of satisfaction and overall positive experience at AUA. When asked why they chose AUA, students named a few key factors: a high-quality, unique education; a place to “think more broadly” where expressing various views and perspectives is encouraged; and the high likelihood of obtaining a successful career upon graduation from AUA. Students noted that their respective programs have met their expectations and that professors are attentive, thorough, and knowledgeable. When asked about weaknesses there was not a consensus: Whereas some students felt like there is too much group work, others noted there is too much autonomy in choosing courses. A few students also noted the lack of consistency in how well teaching assistants are trained. All students in the meeting agreed that there is communication overload from AUA in the form of multiple modes of communication (e.g., email, the

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the English/Communication program noted that in the most recent cycle there were 300+ applicants for 90 slots. The Computer Science, Data Science, and Nursing programs noted similar increases.

learning management system (Moodle, Intranet) and that streamlining messages would be helpful. A handful of students questioned whether admissions standards are decreasing but this concern is counter to the test scores and grade point averages of recent incoming students. Overall, students hold AUA in high regard and wish they could express their pride through merchandise, which is currently not available for purchase at the university.

To ensure academic success among the undergraduate students, there is a strong advising system in place. An advising coordinator meets individually with students before they register for classes and encourages each student to take a “realistic” number of courses. For example, students are advised to start off their first year with a smaller number of concentrated courses rather than a large suite of classes; the rationale is that they will benefit by taking the time to acclimate to university-level work, particularly for those students who may not have received adequate writing, communication, English-language, and quantitative skills in high school. For those who lack these skills there is a strong and intentional infrastructure to “get them up to speed” and in line with their peers. In the Nursing program this deficit in skills actually constitutes one of the greatest challenges. Nursing students receive workshops (e.g., “How to Study at AUA” and English-language courses) to help them integrate into the AUA academic community. Prior to applying to the Nursing program, they are required to master 18 months of English. During the interviews with students, it was noted that a group advising model is followed after registration. The team encourages AUA to consider a student-centered, individualized approach that can be tailored to a student’s specific needs and goals, provide a confidential space to discuss sensitive issues, and allows for the development of a one-on-one relationship with an advisor, which can lead to more accountability for the student.

A key strength of AUA in supporting the undergraduate degree is the strong Student Affairs services that students rely on. Key programs are housed within Student Affairs, including the peer mentoring program, counseling services, residential life, and orientation and commencement. The peer

mentoring program is a prestigious program that was created at the inception of the undergraduate programs at AUA. It is currently populated by 50 peer mentors who provide peer-to-peer mentoring to incoming freshmen on topics ranging from academic program planning to navigating the university, planning for future careers, and general emotional support. The peer mentors are highly skilled after receiving intensive training so not only do they provide support for their peers but gain valuable leadership experience.

The COVID-19 pandemic and war in Artsakh, coupled with the recent geopolitical conflicts in the region have left the AUA community rife with emotional uncertainty. In response, the Counseling Services offered through the Student Affairs office has seen an uptick in students seeking counseling. In the last month alone there have been more appointment requests than in the total previous semester. Currently there are only three staff members (two part-time staff members and one full-time staff member) who can provide psychological services. There is recognition that staffing needs to increase in this area. AUA staff noted that although there is stigma towards seeking mental health support in Armenia more generally, students do seek it out. This is in part because in the first-year students are encouraged to seek services, a commendable attribute of the counseling team. In addition, they have been responsive to student interest in having a male counselor by recently hiring a full-time male counselor to add to the team. The counseling team also provides workshops and training for faculty and staff. A future goal of the counseling team is to conduct a survey to determine if students are receiving the services they need to a satisfactory level.

Financial Aid at AUA mirrors that at American universities and is based on the philosophy that all admitted students should be afforded the opportunity to study at AUA, regardless of financial circumstance. There are four primary types of financial aid offered to students: need-based, merit-based, flexible payment plans, and loans without interest. These are available to all citizens of Armenia. The number of students who live in university housing (dorms) is currently limited to fifty-six students.

Priority is given to international students and there is a waiting list for housing. Students with financial aid qualify for discounted housing rates.

Student Affairs at AUA is also home to New Student Orientation and Graduation ceremonies. The two-day Orientation program, implemented in collaboration with the Admissions Office, helps students acclimate to the university and hosts Open Houses and offers programs that build community and pride in the university. They also work to provide additional support for student veterans. The work the Student Affairs team does on behalf of students is highly commendable. However, with a staff of only 12, the team is stretched thin and the addition of more full-time staff would greatly increase the overall undergraduate (and graduate) experience. Additional staff would allow AUA to achieve even greater heights in the student affairs realm, putting it on par with services offered at universities in the United States, including the development of sports programs, greater attention to the study abroad programs that suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, and academic skill-building (e.g., writing center).

During interviews with several stakeholders, there was a strong sentiment of self-reflection regarding ways in which the undergraduate experience could be improved. For example, it was noted that greater data collection from students about their overall experience at AUA is important to identify opportunities for improvement. There is also interest in surveying students when programmatic changes are made; the review team concurs with this aspiration. This data will help the university address a question the review team heard in several meetings: “are we reaching the next level of education for our students?” There is also interest in providing greater opportunities for students to learn through group project work. However, in the student meeting, a few students noted that there are already too many group projects. A concern we heard from multiple stakeholders is that a large number of students (75% by one estimate) hold part-time or full-time jobs, unrelated to their academic pursuits, that may distract from their studies and ability to engage in curricular and co-curricular activities during their time at AUA. Greater data is needed to measure the impact of part-time (or full-time) work on the

educational experience. Finally, a future goal is to better coordinate undergraduate programming across the different programs, as currently programs take different approaches to admission, etc.

In alignment with the commitment to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion at AUA, there is a growing interest in providing greater support services for students with both chronic and temporary disabilities. A working group on this issue noted some accessibility issues due to limited equipment availability for disability support. The University Library has equipment for students with visual impairments but lacks support for those with hearing impairments, for instance. There is also a need to provide more comprehensive support such as testing for learning disabilities. There is a recognition that hiring additional staff will be necessary to achieve this additional support for students with myriad disabilities. Another way AUA is aiming to enhance diversity is through the admissions process. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic impacting recruitment efforts, there was an increase in the number of applications since 2020. However, the Admissions team is brainstorming about how to increase awareness about AUA's inclusivity, affordability (e.g., financial aid) and support with learning English to attract students from regions outside Yerevan.

A recurring theme throughout the review process that directly impacts the integrity of the undergraduate degree is the need for more full-time faculty<sup>2</sup>. Currently, roughly 75% of the faculty are adjunct faculty who are employed on a contractual basis (typically a three-year contract) and a significant burden falls on those who are full-time faculty in terms of teaching, research, and service. For example, it was noted that in the English/Communications program few faculty made themselves available for program assessments because expectations of service "are nebulously defined and vague" and a small number of individuals "wear many hats." As such, the burden falls on the program chair to fill in the service gaps and numerous stakeholders noted that an increase in the percentage of full-time faculty would help alleviate this load. An additional benefit would be an increase in the number of

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<sup>2</sup> Tenure does not exist at AUA

faculty who could dedicate time to conducting research, one of the AUAF Board's priorities. Currently, the amount of service the full-time faculty do, coupled with the lack of a PhD program, comes at the cost of conducting research. However, numerous interview participants did highlight the "industry insights" that adjunct faculty bring to AUA. During the meeting with the faculty and the senate, they noted that revisiting and revising the workload policy is necessary. The current policy does not align with the university's aspirations as a research intensive institution, and the load allocation, and annual faculty performance evaluations lack consistency across and within colleges. Particular attention needs to be paid to proper allocation of the research and service components. Academic deans and faculty senate members noted that successful expansion of the university and growth of the undergraduate program will depend on first clarifying and equalizing the current workload. The team recommends AUA strengthen consistency and transparency of faculty workload, including service, considering the university's growth and research aspirations (CFR 3.2).

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, the integrity of the undergraduate degree program at AUA is high. The university adheres to a strong academic mission of providing students with a rigorous pedagogical experience, strong student support network, and aspirational goals for future careers and graduate study. This rigor is evidenced by tangible outcomes, including a high number of students who quickly find positions in industry upon graduation, the significant amount of respect AUA commands across the country, and the increasing investment interests to the university. The team's findings are that the institution provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate a highly regarded and rigorous undergraduate program.

### *- Theme Two: Academic Program Review*

In its January 2022 proposal to address the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of accreditation, AUA noted that the two themes identified for in-depth inquiry were selected to "reflect both the strengths of the University, this moment in the AUA's and Armenia's development, and some

of the challenges the University must address as it continues to pursue its mission and meet the demands of higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (p.1). For these reasons, the analysis of and reflection on the process of academic program review is timely and appropriate. Academic program review, including the annual student learning assessment process, was identified as an institutional strength in AUA’s previous accreditation review. With the significant growth in undergraduate education, and with external influences such as the global pandemic, it is timely for AUA to review both the processes and the results of program review and assessment along with their integration into the fabric of other significant university processes such as planning and budget. A working group on Academic Program Review was formed in fall 2022. It drew up a series of incisive questions to guide its analysis of the process and results of program review at AUA.

The process that has been developed for the review of academic programs at AUA is mature and robust. It is laid out in the Academic Program Review Guidelines, a Faculty Senate policy that has been revised twice since its creation in 2012 and which is presently under review and revision as a result of the current examination and analysis. The guidelines provide for a self-study on the part of the program; a review committee that includes faculty from other AUA programs along with reviewers external to AUA; and a wrap-up meeting with university leadership followed by a mutually agreed-to plan for implementation of prioritized actions to be taken as a result of the review. The guidelines stress that the review process must be grounded in data and evidence, student learning outcomes assessments, stakeholder input, and feedback from the external reviewers.

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) supports programs undergoing review by providing a range of data for use in the self-study and by the external reviewers. The OIRA website provides resources for the faculty of programs undergoing periodic review, including a link to the Academic Program Review Guidelines referenced above, which spell out the required elements of the self-study. Also available on the OIRA website are templates for program faculty to use in preparing

their annual assessment plans (SLAPs) and reports (SLARs) as well as a link where specific data requests can be made. An Assessment Handbook is also available on the website. The staff of the OIRA assist faculty in interpreting and analyzing the data used in preparing self-studies. While the staff was augmented by several analysts with the addition of undergraduate programs, recent vacancies have resulted in delays in providing such assistance to programs undergoing review, as noted in the institutional report. AUA is in the process of filling these vacancies and providing current year data.

All graduate programs at AUA have undergone at least one review, with most having completed three or more reviews, on a cycle of five-six years. At the undergraduate level, to date, three degree programs and the General Education program completed the academic program review process in 2018-2019. The process of academic program review at AUA appears to be functioning in a manner that supports educational effectiveness and furthers the university's mission by ensuring that its degree programs continue to meet societal and regional needs. An important source of evidence and data for the periodic program review is derived from the annual assessment of student learning outcomes by each degree program. Here, there has been less consistency across degree programs and across time. Only one degree program has completed annual assessments regularly; at least one program has not yet engaged in the annual process. Challenges identified by the working group on Academic Program Review, based on stakeholder input, included inconsistent follow-up on agreed-to actions, minimal student participation in assessing student learning, and the workload associated with the review process. A number of sound recommendations resulted from the working group's investigation aimed at improving the assessment and review processes and better "harmonizing" them with other university processes such as budget development and strategic planning. Revisions to the Guidelines were drafted and put forward to the Curriculum Committee for consideration.

During the interviews with the graduate program chairs, they noted the significant decline over the past few years in the graduate enrollment compared to when the university started. Suggestions

offered included 1) reviewing graduate program structure and shortening it where appropriate to better meet student needs and preferences, 2) offering afternoon classes to attract working professionals, 3) offering summer classes to help students finish on time, 4) creating flexible modalities with online and hybrid courses, 5) hiring full-time faculty rather than rely on adjunct faculty, and 6) expanding recruitment efforts internally to communicate the financial support and services and externally to attract highly qualified international students.

Complementary to academic program review, AUA developed guidelines for the annual assessment of academic support units such as the library, the Admissions Office, the Institutional Research Office, and the Office of the Registrar. The guidelines are posted on the OIRA website. They call for these units to formulate a mission statement and objectives and call, as well, for the assessment of one to three of the unit's objectives each year. The guidelines include resources to assist units in their assessment process: a worksheet for aligning units' missions with the university mission and templates for the assessment plan and report. A timeline for the annual assessment process is included. AUA's goal of assessing academic support units is an important one, and the guidelines provide useful tools. However, these assessments have not generally taken place to date, as acknowledged in the institutional report. It will be important for AUA to identify the barriers to completing support unit assessment and work to find ways to make it sustainable.

The team commends AUA's commitment to ensuring that it meets its mission through systematic program review and assessment, and its deep evidence-based analysis of these processes as part of the reaffirmation of accreditation process. AUA is encouraged to continue its work to achieve consistency over time and across the university with respect to program review and assessment and to harmonize them more fully with the overarching processes of budget allocation, strategic planning, and workforce planning.

## **IID. Component 9: Reflection and plans for improvement**

The evaluation team commends the AUA community for its commitment to the mission and the education of students of Armenia and the region and their resilience in the face of the particularly turbulent local context and global challenges during the review period. The team appreciates the well-managed access to the self-study report, the accompanying documents, the team's nimble adaptation to what was forced to become an online site visit, as well as the additional evidence provided. Team members were pleased to observe that all constituents (faculty, students, staff, and administrators) were satisfied with the positive atmosphere, strong morale, collegiality, the support provided and institutional efforts to remain mission centric despite the instability over the past two years. AUA's commitment to expanding the humanities in their new building plans is commendable. This initiative, aimed at fostering student citizenship and societal engagement, stands out, especially at a time when many better-resourced higher education institutions are scaling back their focus on the humanities.

The university has in place robust planning processes, stable funding resources and solid structures that align with its mission and hence is financially viable. AUA grew its endowment fivefold from extensive fundraising campaigns, naming of its colleges, scholarships, and moderate increase in financial aid. The major goals of AUA were achieved over the past review period. It was noted in several of the interviews that AUA is "The University of Choice" in Armenia. Acceptance rate is at 50% and matriculation of those accepted exceeds 88%, impressive testaments to the above claim. AUA's ongoing contributions to Armenian society and to Armenia's young democracy and thoughtful planning to continue to enhance that impact are admirable and commendable.

As AUA embarks on its new strategy, which includes significant campus growth and expansion, along with acquiring new building(s) to increase student enrollment and human resources (faculty and staff), expand undergraduate and graduate programs, and strengthen the university's research initiatives, the team suggests an inclusive process. This would involve all stakeholders, including those

at the Dilijan campus, to ensure optimal outcomes. The aspirational plan for growth and expansion holds promise, with a committed base of engaged constituents (faculty, students, staff, administrators) to maintain momentum. This will enable the effective implementation of new priorities and fulfillment of its mission. The team observed that AUA has an aspirational but achievable plan to become a more research focused university. This includes the building of a \$55M research and teaching facility, for which \$29M and the purchase of the property have been already secured. The Office of Development has done impressive work and continues to hold a number of events, particularly across the United States. In response to organizational change and the dynamic context in which AUA operates, stakeholders have identified opportunities for enhancement that the team has noted:

- Consider diversifying the Curriculum Committee of the Senate to include a broader representation of faculty from various colleges and disciplines.
- Explore ways to enhance the use of the off-site campus by incorporating additional graduate programs and developing the facility into an engaging space for the student experience.
- Evaluate strategies for advancing the research ecosystem and infrastructure, which may include reflecting on tenure policies, boosting full-time faculty ratios, developing PhD programs, and seeking additional funding and support for faculty research.

### **SECTION III – OTHER TOPICS (such as Substantive Change**

- *None*

### **SECTION IV – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

AUA is leading the region with its American higher education curriculum, policies, and vision for the future for the country's emerging workforce. The team appreciated the transparent communication and thoughtful feedback from the interviews with the Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff, as well as the new president.

During the review, the team found that AUA has shown remarkable success in student engagement and achievement, illustrating its commitment to educational excellence. Despite operating in a challenging environment, AUA has navigated obstacles with agility, adapting its offerings to meet evolving needs. The team's findings reflect confidence in AUA's capacity to maintain its trajectory of success and continue making significant contributions to its community and the wider region.

*Commendations. The team commends AUA for:*

1. A comprehensive, reflective, and forward-thinking report, which demonstrated an inclusive and thoughtful process of self-assessment and reflection.
2. Successful expansion into undergraduate education with eight highly subscribed bachelor's degrees, a General Education program, and an array of student support services.
3. Broad consensus on strong morale, collegiality, active engagement of all constituents (faculty, students, staff, and administrators), and especially students in their various community-oriented drives during and despite the crises (COVID-19, wars).
4. Exceptional commitment of faculty, administrators, and staff to both the institution and its societal role, with special emphasis on support for students.
5. A culture committed to regular review and continuous improvement in program assessment to ensure rigor and coherence.
6. Policies and procedures that enforce ethics and integrity in all its activities (Policy on Policies, Whistleblower Policy, Student Code of Conduct among others), and set a standard for other local universities to follow (such as the Whistleblower Policy).
7. Consistent support of and dedication to the mission of AUA on the part of the Boards of Trustees; their deep knowledge of the opportunities and challenges facing AUA; and their vision and goals for the near and long-term future of the university and its students, faculty, and staff.
8. A focus on financial sustainability over the last decade with multiple years of balanced budgets

through monitoring expenses, accounting for currency fluctuations and increasing revenue diversity, as well as growing the endowment by fivefold.

*Recommendations. The team recommends that AUA:*

1. Based on its stated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), continue efforts to: a) finalize and adopt formal DEI definitions encompassing diverse perspectives and cultural sensitivities in curriculum and research; b) specify a designated DEI officer; and c) develop learning module(s) covering harassment, discrimination, disrespectful behavior, and reporting procedures for faculty, staff, and students. (CFR 1.4)
2. To accommodate the recent and anticipated enrollment growth, prioritize identifying and communicating essential infrastructure to support AUA's goals without exceeding capacity. Maintain a dual focus on short-term and long-term strategies for faculty, staff, space, and facilities. (CFRs 3.5, 4.7)
3. Ensure clear and unified communication to stakeholders, particularly about the growth objectives, challenges, and mitigation strategies over the next five years. (CFRs 3.7, 4.6)
4. Strengthen consistency and transparency of faculty workload, including service roles, to align with the university's growth and research aspirations. (CFR 3.2)
5. Further strengthen institutional resiliency by creating and broadly distributing contingency plans for academic and business continuity in times of crises. (CFRs 1.7, 2.1, 3.1, 3.6, 3.7)

**APPENDICES**

The report includes the following appendices:

*A. Federal Compliance Forms*

**1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Material Reviewed                           | Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)   |
| Policy on credit hour                       | Is this policy easily accessible? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO   |
|   | If so, where is the policy located?   |
|   | <p>Comments:</p> <p><i>Credit Hour policy, <a href="https://policies.aua.am/policy/34">https://policies.aua.am/policy/34</a><br/><a href="https://policies.aua.am/">https://policies.aua.am/</a></i></p>  |
| Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour | Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO   |
|   | If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO   |
|   | <p>Comments:</p> <p>The University's academic calendar and bell schedules are designed to assure that standard course blocks as well as evening courses meet the credit hour policy requirements. The calendar is proposed by the Registrar, reviewed by the Faculty Senate, and approved by the Provost.</p> <p>The Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate approves all new courses and reviews them for consistency with all policies, including Credit Hour.</p> <p>Program chairs review and approve all syllabi for compliance with policies including Credit Hour.</p> <p>The OIRA archives all syllabi.</p> <p>The OIRA performs random checks of syllabi for, among other things, class meeting times.</p> <p>The Academic Program Review process includes a review of all program activities for compliance with policies, including Credit Hour</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Schedule of on ground courses showing when they meet       | Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO               |
|  | Comments:<br><br><i>Online schedule of Fall 2023 courses, <a href="https://auasonis.jenzabarcloud.com/GENSRsC.cfm">https://auasonis.jenzabarcloud.com/GENSRsC.cfm</a></i> |
| Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses | How many syllabi were reviewed?<br>Three  |
|  | What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)?<br>Online  |
|  | What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral              |
|  | What discipline(s) Freshman Seminar (FND102), Master's in PH (PH340), Masters of Business Administration (BUS309)   |

American University of Armenia 2 Thematic Pathway for Accreditation | Fall 2023

Appendix 2 Federal Compliance Forms

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.  | Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
|   | Comments:  |
| Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated)<br>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level. | How many syllabi were reviewed? Three  |
|   | What kinds of courses? Ongoing (BSN 101, EC299, BUS320)  |
|   | What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral   |
|   | What discipline(s)<br>Bachelor's Nursing, BA in English & Communication, Master in Bus Admin   |
|   | Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
|   | Comments:  |
| Sample program information (catalog, website, or other)   | How many programs were reviewed? Three   |
|   | What kinds of programs were reviewed?<br>BS in Data Science, BA in Politics and Governance, and Master of Public Health  |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| program materials) |   |
|                    | What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral   |
|                    | What discipline(s)?<br>BS in Data Science, BA in Politics and Governance, and Master of Public Health   |
|                    | Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
|                    | <p>Comments:</p> <p><i>Catalog, <a href="https://catalog.aua.am/">https://catalog.aua.am/</a></i></p> <p><i>Webpages</i></p> <p><i>English and Communications, <a href="https://baec.aua.am/">https://baec.aua.am/</a></i></p> <p><i>BA in Business, <a href="https://cbe.aua.am/ba-business/">https://cbe.aua.am/ba-business/</a></i></p> <p><i>Master of Public Health, <a href="https://chs.aua.am/mph/">https://chs.aua.am/mph/</a></i></p> |

Review Completed By: Seta Khajarian Date: 10/26/2023

## 2. Marketing and Recruitment Review Form

Under federal regulation\* WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices.

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Material Reviewed          | Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.   |
| **Federal regulations      | Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students?<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO   |
|                            | Comments:<br><br><i>AUA has no outside recruiters</i>  |
| Degree completion and cost | Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO   |
|                            | Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO   |
|                            | Comments:<br><br><i>Typical length of program is listed on each program's webpage and outreach materials. <a href="https://aua.am/academics/">https://aua.am/academics/</a></i><br><br><i>For example:</i><br><i>BA in English and Communications, <a href="https://baec.aua.am/">https://baec.aua.am/</a></i><br><i>BA in Business, <a href="https://cbe.aua.am/ba-business/">https://cbe.aua.am/ba-business/</a></i><br><i>Master of Public Health, <a href="https://chs.aua.am/mph/">https://chs.aua.am/mph/</a></i><br><br><i>Tuition and fees are published on the University's website</i><br><i>Undergraduate: <a href="https://admissions.aua.am/uqrad/tuition-and-fees/">https://admissions.aua.am/uqrad/tuition-and-fees/</a></i><br><i>Graduate: <a href="https://admissions.aua.am/graduate/tuition-and-fees/">https://admissions.aua.am/graduate/tuition-and-fees/</a></i><br><br><i>Financial aid: <a href="https://admissions.aua.am/tuition-and-financial-aid/">https://admissions.aua.am/tuition-and-financial-aid/</a></i> |
| Careers and employment     | Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO   |
|                            | Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>Comments:</p> <p><i>Typical career paths are listed on each programs' webpage and outreach materials, <a href="https://aqa.am/academics/">https://aqa.am/academics/</a></i></p> <p><i>For example:</i></p> <p><i>BA in Politics and Governance, <a href="https://bapg.aqa.am/">https://bapg.aqa.am/</a></i></p> <p><i>MS in Economics, <a href="https://cbe.aqa.am/ms-economics/">https://cbe.aqa.am/ms-economics/</a></i></p> <p><i>MA in Human Rights and Social Justice, <a href="https://hrsjaqa.am/">https://hrsjaqa.am/</a></i></p> |
|--|--|

\*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

\*\*Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Seta Khajarian  
Date: 10/26/2023

### 3. Student Complaints Review Form

Under federal regulation\* WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Material Reviewed            | <p>Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)<br/>           All policies were reviewed [Academic, general, etc.]<br/> <a href="https://policies.aua.am/policy/11">https://policies.aua.am/policy/11</a></p>   |
| Policy on student complaints | <p>Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>  |
|                              | <p>If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where?</p>  |
|                              | <p>Comments:</p> <p><i>Policy on student complaints</i></p> <p><i>Grade appeal policy in the Grades Policies policy</i><br/> <a href="https://policies.aua.am/policy/11">https://policies.aua.am/policy/11</a></p> <p><i>Whistleblower: Responsible and Ethical Conduct at AUA</i><br/> <a href="https://policies.aua.am/policy/136">https://policies.aua.am/policy/136</a></p>  |
| Process(es)/ procedure       | <p>Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If so, please describe briefly:<br/>           AUA has several processes, policies, and resources in place to help students through a complaint, depending on the nature of the complaint. For example, if the issue is Student Conduct, it is both the right and responsibility of all members of the University community to report violations of the Student Code of Conduct to the Provost or in matters of immediate danger to life or property to University security guards or state bodies. A Student Code of Conduct Violation Report must be made in writing either to CodeofConduct@aua.am or via physical correspondence. Then, the Povost would take immediate action through a process clearly shared on <a href="https://policies.aua.am/policy/101">https://policies.aua.am/policy/101</a>.</p> |
|                              | <p>If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>   |

|         |   |
|---------|---|
|         | <p>Comments:</p> <p><i>Process(es)/ procedures</i></p> <p><i>Appeal procedure in the Student Code of Ethics</i><br/> <a href="https://policies.aua.am/policy/10">https://policies.aua.am/policy/10</a></p> <p><i>Appeal procedure in the Student Code of Conduct</i><br/> <a href="https://policies.aua.am/policy/10">https://policies.aua.am/policy/10</a></p> <p><i>Standing Committee on Student Conduct and Ethics Procedure Regulation</i><br/> <a href="https://policies.aua.am/OpenFile?fileName=Standing-Committee-on-Student-Conduct-and-Ethics-Procedure-Regulations-March-2016.pdf">https://policies.aua.am/OpenFile?fileName=Standing-Committee-on-Student-Conduct-and-Ethics-Procedure-Regulations-March-2016.pdf</a></p> <p><i>Ethics and Grievance Committee Procedures</i><br/> <a href="https://policies.aua.am/OpenFile?fileName=Ethics-Grievance-Committee-Procedure-Regulation--06.-30.-2022.pdf">https://policies.aua.am/OpenFile?fileName=Ethics-Grievance-Committee-Procedure-Regulation--06.-30.-2022.pdf</a></p> |
| Records | <p>Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where?<br/> With the Grievance Committee files. Marked Confidential.</p> <hr/> <p>Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>If so, please describe briefly:<br/> Outside of the Ethics and Grievance Committee's monthly report to the Faculty Senate, monitoring student complaints over time is not one of AUA's regular reporting.</p>  |

Review Completed By: Seta Khajarian  
Date: 10/26/2023

## 4. Transfer Credit Policy Review Form

Under federal regulations\* WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

| Material Reviewed         | Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)   |
|---------------------------|--|
| Transfer Credit Policy(s) | Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
|                           | If so, is the policy publicly available? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO<br>If so, where? <a href="https://policies.aua.am/policy/126">https://policies.aua.am/policy/126</a>  |
|                           | Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
|                           | Comments:<br><br><i>Transfer Credit policy</i><br><a href="https://policies.aua.am/policy/126">https://policies.aua.am/policy/126</a><br><br><i>Concurrent and Non-Concurrent Enrollment and Waiver of Requirements for University-Level Course policy</i><br><a href="https://policies.aua.am/policy/148">https://policies.aua.am/policy/148</a><br><br>All policies<br><a href="https://policies.aua.am/">https://policies.aua.am/</a> |

\*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

1. Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and
2. Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By: Seta Khajarian

Date: 10/26/2023

## B. Off-Campus Locations Review

Institution: American University of Armenia  
Type of Visit: Off-campus Virtual Visit  
Name of reviewer/s: Fadlo R. Khuri (Team Chair)  
Date/s of review: October 20, 2023

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all visits in which off-campus sites were reviewed<sup>3</sup>. One form should be used for each site visited. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this matter in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report.

1. Site Name and Address  
Dilijan Campus  
Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) Training and Research Center  
Maxim Gorky 29  
Dilijan, Tavush Region  
Armenia 3901
2. Background Information (number of programs offered at this site; degree levels; FTE of faculty and enrollment; brief history at this site; designation as a branch campus standalone location, or satellite location by WSCUC)

Dilijan campus was approved by the commission as AUA branch campus in 2023. It hosts only one graduate program, the "Master of Science in Economics" (MSE) within the Manoogian Simone College of Business and Economics (CBE). The program shares the facilities with the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) Training and Research Center. The shared facilities include sleeping quarters (apartment flats with two or three single-occupancy bedrooms), sporting facilities, classrooms, various conference venues, a library, and a canteen).

The program was developed with the cooperation and support of CBA and launched in 2023. It was initially offered in Yerevan and some courses were offered at CBA. After Commission approval, the Dilijan campus has offered the full program over the past year. The site initially provided internship and job opportunities for students, as well as engaged students and graduates in extensive research and policy analysis projects under the guidance of prominent international and senior CBA researchers and policy makers.

The program aims to 1) equip students with theoretical knowledge, quantitative skills, and applied analytical abilities to investigate and solve economic problems; 2) and prepare students for careers and advanced studies in a wide range of fields in economics and finance.

As of fall 2023, there were 16 faculty members compared to 10 in 2022 (5 full-time, 5 part-time, 7 core, 3 visiting).

3. Nature of the Review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)

The off-campus review was conducted virtually through Zoom on October 20, 2023 by the team chair. The visit included a virtual tour of the campus (its building, classrooms, administrative office sporting facilities, classrooms, conference venues, the library, and canteen). The following were interviewed virtually:

- Bruce M. Boghosian, the President
- Vache Gabrielyan, Dean, College of Business and Economics
- Gurgen Aslanyan, Program Chair, Master of Science in Economics
- MSE Faculty members
- MSE Students

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<sup>3</sup> See Protocol for Review of Off-Campus Sites to determine whether and how many sites will be visited.

- Syuzan Mkrtchyan, Assistant to the Head of Dilijan Training and Research Center, CBA

| Lines of Inquiry   | Observations and Findings   | Follow-up Required (identify the issues) |
|--|---|--|
| <i>For a recently approved site.</i> Has the institution followed up on the recommendations from the substantive change committee that approved this new site?   | There was one main recommendation to provide evidence for comparable academic support services to students similar to the main. This has been resolved. Students are satisfied with the support at this location and there have been no complaints over the past year.  |  |
| <i>Fit with Mission.</i> How does the institution conceive of this and other off-campus sites relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How is the site planned and operationalized? (CFRs 1.2, 3.1, 3.5, 4.1)              | There is no difference between the main and off-campus site. The program goals are aligned with the university mission. The aim of the MSE program is to equip students with theoretical knowledge, and applied analytical abilities to investigate and solve economic problems and to prepare graduates for careers. This is in alignment with and serves the AUA mission “to contribute to the further development and advancement of Armenia through teaching, scholarship, creativity and service”. Their presence in Dilijan and partnership with the CBA Training and Research Center helps expose students to the practice hub where they can be taught by CBA experts, mentored and exposed to real economic, relevant problems and contribute to its solution. |  |
| <i>Connection to the Institution.</i> How visible and deep is the presence of the institution at the off-campus site? In what ways does the institution integrate off-campus students into the life and culture of the institution? (CFRs 1.2, 2.10) | There is only one graduate program (MSE) at the off-campus site. The faculty and staff commute daily to the main campus, which is only around one hour, 20 minutes away. The students informed us that they are invited and involved in the events at the main campus, discussion groups and other activities. Students are also invited to all possible activities, seminars and social events at CBA.   |  |
| <i>Quality of the Learning Site.</i> How does the physical environment foster learning and faculty-student contact? What kind of oversight ensures that the off-campus site is well managed? (CFRs 1.8, 2.1, 2.5, 3.1, 3.5)                          | There is no difference between the main and the off-campus site. The physical environment is active, supports learning such as lounges, dedicated areas for work, study and discussion spaces, and includes full time, part-time and CBA employees who teach students, expose them to current economic issues and engage them in research, and facilitate their internship through projects from the CBA and industry. Students have access to all CBA amenities from library to gym.<br><br>The physical environment appears to be adequate and effective when viewed virtually.   |  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><i>Student Support Services.</i> What is the site's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services and other appropriate student services? Or how are these otherwise provided? What does data show about the effectiveness of these services? (CFRs 2.11-2.13, 3.6, 3.7)</p>  | <p>The services are available at the off-campus site and comparable to the main. There are support services on site such as academic advising by faculty who come to the site. There are counseling services available in an online format.</p> <p>The CBA Assistant to the Head assists and supports students and seeks their feedback. There were no complaints filed by students for any issue since last year.</p> <p>The library off-site is a virtual one while at the main is a physical library; however, students can access and utilize the CBA physical library. There is abundant work space for students to study or hold discussion groups. There are also abundant CBA facilities and resources available to students.</p>  |  |
| <p><i>Faculty.</i> Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? In what ways does the institution ensure that off-campus faculty is involved in the academic oversight of the programs at this site? How do these faculty members participate in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? (CFRs 2.4, 3.1-3.4, 4.6)</p> | <p>Faculty members from the College of Business and Economics teach students. The Dean of the College ensures that all faculty members teaching the graduate program are trained in program assessment and are evaluated for teaching effectiveness in the same manner as faculty in the main campus. Faculty at the site design the courses, have the freedom for their syllabi, quizzes, teaching methodology; but their standardizing multi courses with regard to material, mannerism and exam to ensure equity.</p> <p>Additionally, there is a policy whereby faculty members submit research proposal and once approved get course release to protect their time for research and the college sponsor their continuing education to enhance their teaching and research skills.</p> <p>There are 10 full time faculty and 10 adjunct faculty members who teach MSE. Up to 3 faculty are the site daily.</p> |  |
| <p><i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> Who designs the programs and courses at this site? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to those on the main campus? (CFR 2.1-2.3, 4.6)</p>   | <p>The faculty members design the program, in consultation with the department and the college in the main campus and revise accordingly. The program is comparable in content, outcomes and quality to those in the main campus. Actually, it was initially offered in the main campus and transitioned to be completely offered at the off-campus location.</p>  |  |
| <p><i>Retention and Graduation.</i> What data on retention and graduation are collected on students enrolled at this off-campus site? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to programs at the main campus? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed? (CFRs 2.6, 2.10)</p>                              | <p>The retention and graduation rates for MSE are comparable and to some extent lower than programs at the main campus since students work and pay for their tuition. That is why AUA introduced the subsidization program. Another issue is that some of the students are under-prepared in Math and statistics and that's why the university developed a summer program as a bridge for these skills. There is also an issue</p>   |  |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | in recruitment of students at the site because of limited availability of jobs in the Dilijan campus.   |   |
| <p><i>Student Learning.</i> How does the institution assess student learning at off-campus sites? Is this process comparable to that used on the main campus? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results from the main campus? (CFRs 2.6, 4.6, 4.7)</p> | <p>The program undergoes the “Academic Program review” every 5 years similar to other programs in the department with external referees input to ensure the viability and relevance of the program and student success. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) oversees all programs, their learning outcomes, course syllabus, student learning assessment, surveys, and ensures effectiveness in the main campus and MSE in the off-campus. Learning experience for MSE students at this site is paramount as they are supervised by AUA faculty and work on research projects from CBA, attend workshops, seminars and present findings. There are improvements made over the past years based on assessment results such as in the last alumni survey the recommended focus was on ensuring work space available to students. Prior to that, the outcome of student learning assessment focused on matching course work to the course objectives and the priority was to develop students' independent research skills.</p> | <p>It is advised to integrate the program with other graduate programs through common research projects to benefit from location and have richer student experiences.</p> |
| <p><i>Quality Assurance Processes:</i> How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover off-campus sites? What evidence is provided that off-campus programs and courses are educationally effective? (CFRs 4.4-4.8)</p>  | <p>QA is the same for main and off-site locations. The dean is developing a PhD program to attract and subsidize international students and a diverse student body at the site. The aim is to reach the target of 20 subsidized students but not expand more. The program is very effective. Half of the graduates are employed by CBA, others work in finance companies, some launch their own business as entrepreneurs and the remaining are supported to pursue their PhD program and come back to teach.</p>   | <p>It is recommended to formally track employment of alumni and make those data anonymously and publicly available.</p>   |

5.

*C. Distance Education Review*

Institution: American University of Armenia (AUA)  
 Type of Visit: Remote Visit  
 Name of reviewer/s: Seta Khajarian  
 Date/s of review: 10/21-10/26, 2023  
 Section Completed: A OR **XXB**

**SECTION B: For Institutions Without Approved Distance Education Programs**

1. Courses reviewed (as appropriate; please list)

2. Nature of review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed): Briefing from AUA

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Nature of Online Learning Courses. How do faculty use distance learning options in face to face courses e.g., blended learning, hybrid learning, hybrid flexible (hyflex), flipped classroom, or other instructional strategies that allow student/instructor separation? How extensive is distance learning in the curriculum?</p>  | <p>AUA was 100% online during the pandemic through spring 2021. Since then several courses have been offered either in an online or hybrid format. See attached table for the list of courses. AUA has no fully distance education degree programs.</p>  | <p>AUA may need to establish a formal protocol for courses transitioning to online formats. This protocol should not only cover synchronous delivery on an online platform, but also ensure the comprehensive integration of instructional design across all course elements. Faculty involvement is crucial in the development and construction of course materials, ensuring that each component is effectively tailored for online education.</p> |
| <p>Faculty and Student Preparation for Distance Education. What training is offered to faculty who incorporate distance learning in their courses? Can students request a distance learning option for onsite courses? How is their placement in the option determined? What orientation to distance education do students receive?</p> | <p>During the pandemic, faculty received training on redesigning courses in an online format. Most courses that now incorporate online instruction are taught in a synchronous format. For students, the Office of Student Affairs administered the Writing Center and Student Workshops online. A virtual Student Union was created to provide students with access to the campus resources and support, including the Math and Writing Center, Counseling Services, Career Services, and various student activities. New Student Orientation and</p> |  |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <p>Peer Mentoring was conducted online for fall 2020.</p>  |  |
| <p>Quality of the Distance Education Infrastructure. Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?</p>                   | <p>AUA's library organizes training to faculty and students before each semester on the University's learning management system, Moodle, which is utilized for onsite courses as well as courses that are offered online. The university's Information &amp; Communication Technologies Services (ICTS) provides full-service help from Monday – Friday from 8:00 AM– 10:00 PM, and on Saturdays from 9:00 AM – 7:00 PM. In addition, ICTS provides 24-hour emergency on call support to faculty and students. Faculty brown bag discussions were held online in order for faculty to share teaching strategies and discuss teaching challenges. The University's course syllabus template was revised to include a specific section on communication to provide students with information about how to best communicate with instructors.</p> |  |
| <p>Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction. How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for "faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction"? How is compliance monitored? What activities count as student/instructor substantive interaction?"</p> | <p>Courses that are taught online in a synchronous format have regular and substantive faculty-student interaction.</p>  |  |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Academic Engagement. How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “Academic Engagement”? How is compliance monitored? What activities contribute to academic engagement?</p> | <p>Students taking synchronous classes interact with faculty about academic matters.</p> |  |
|--|--|--|

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Student Identification Verification and Privacy. What is the institution’s process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment?</p> | <p>AUA has processes in place to protect technology from cybersecurity attacks. In terms of student verification, AUA uses secure university provided login credentials.</p> |  |
|---|--|--|

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Quality Assurance. What processes are in place to collect data from courses that use some type of remote learning? How are the findings used to improve instruction?</p> | <p>There are procedures for approving online courses, the Curriculum Committee does so for the Catalog, regardless of implementation (scheduling, instructor, modality, etc). Implementation is organized at the College-level, typically between the dean, program chair, and/or relevant faculty. All courses, regardless of being taught in-person or online, adhere to consistent evaluation procedures and maintain uniform standards for assessing student learning. This ensures parity in educational quality and evaluation across different modes of teaching.</p> |  |
|---|--|--|

Courses offered online or hybrid from spring 2021 to spring 2023.

| Term                      | College/Unit      | Subject Code | Course Number | Course Title                                     | Instructor First Name | Instructor Last Name | Instructor Title                      | Instructor status if adjunct Core/Visiting * | Notes   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|--|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Fall 2022/<br>Spring 2023 | General Education | FN D         | 101           | Freshman Seminar 1                               | Melissa               | Brown                | Adjunct Assistant Professor           | Core   | One of 20-25 sections of courses offered online                         |
| Fall 2022                 | General Education | CHSS         | 160           | Introduction to Arabic Language and Arab Culture | Setrag                | Hovsepyan            | Adjunct Lecturer                      | Visiting                                     | No longer offered online, only onsite (summer)                          |
| Fall 2022/<br>Spring 2023 | General Education | FN D         |               | 102 Freshman Seminar 2                           | Melissa               | Brown                | Adjunct Assistant Professor           | Core   | One of 20-25 sections of courses offered online                         |
| Fall 2022                 | CHSS              | TEFL         |               | 306 Teaching practicum                           | Talin                 | Grigorian            | Senior Lecturer                       | Core   | Hybrid. 60% face to face + 10% online + 30% student teachers' fieldwork |
| Fall 2022                 | General Education | ENV          | 120           | Sustainable Food Systems                         |                       | devosyan             | Adjunct Lecturer/<br>Adjunct Lecturer | Core   | Hybrid . One lecturer on campus . One online.                           |

|             |     |       |     |   |          |           |                              |      |  |
|-------------|-----|-------|-----|---|----------|-----------|------------------------------|------|--|
| Spring 2023 | SPH | PH    | 340 | Health Services Management                | Kathleen | White     | Visiting Professor           | Core |  |
| Fall 2022   | SPH | PH    | 323 | Biostatistics: Modeling and Sampling      | Martina  | Pavlicova | Visiting Associate Professor | Core |  |
| Spring 2023 | CBE | EC ON | 357 | Portfolio Management and Asset Allocation | Joseph   | Simonian  | Visiting Professor           | Core |  |

| Term        | College/Unit | Subject Code | Course Number | Course Title                   | Instructor First Name | Instructor Last Name | Instructor Title                         | Instructor status if adjunct Core/Visiting * | Notes  |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--|--|--------|
| Spring 2023 | CBE          | EC ON        | 361           | Sustainable Development        | Hayk                  | Kamalyan             | Scholar-in Residence/Assistant Professor | Core   |        |
| Spring 2023 | CBE          | BUS          | 309           | Special Topics in Management   | Virginia              | Bodolica             | Visiting Lecturer                        | Visiting                                     |        |
| Fall 2022   | CSE          | DS           |               | 5 Cheminformatics              |                       | Matevosyan/Kha       |  | Core   | Hybrid |
| Fall 2022   | CSE          | CS           |               | 333 Network Programming I      |                       | Baloian              | Visiting Associate Professor             | Core   | Hybrid |
| Fall 2022   | CSE          | CS           |               | 5 Capstone preparation         | Nelson                | Baloian              | Visiting Associate Professor             | Core   | Hybrid |
| Spring 2023 | CSE          | CS           | 245           | Introduction to Bioinformatics | Sajjad                | Gharaghani Sakar     | Adjunct Lecturer                         | Visiting                                     | Hybrid |
| Summer 2023 | CSE          | DS           |               | 213 Computational Biology S    |                       | Gharaghani Sakar     | Adjunct Lecturer                         | Visiting                                     | Hybrid |

\* AUA does not offer tenure. At AUA core faculty includes full-time faculty as well as part-time faculty who have taught at least three semesters in the last three years.